



Montgomery County Council

News Release

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COUNCILMEMBERS MOVE TO IMPROVE COUNTY'S RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Councilmember Phil Andrews, chair of the Council's Public Safety Committee, today introduced legislation that would tighten up oversight at the Montgomery County domestic violence shelter. The measure establishes a permanent commission on domestic violence reporting to the Council and empowers the county Health and Human Services director to insure quality clinical services and assure clients' rights.

The "Domestic Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance Act" is co-sponsored by Councilmembers Blair Ewing, Isiah Leggett, and Howard Denis. The idea of an oversight commission originated with former Councilmember Betty Ann Krahne, who joined her colleagues at the bill's introduction.

The bill would give the County's Health & Human Services department director the authority to hire and fire a shelter's clinical director and establish minimum professional requirements for program staff. It would also require written policies and procedures regarding admission, termination, and rights of residents. And it would establish a Commission on Domestic Violence to annually review the operation of County-operated facilities and advise the Council about the facility's effectiveness and about planning the County's further domestic violence initiatives.

"One of the Council's priorities has been to strengthen our response to domestic violence," said Councilmember Andrews. "We've added victim assistance workers to our police district stations, given the State's Attorney and Sheriff more resources in this area, and worked to insure that protective orders are available outside working hours.

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“We also funded the establishment of the Betty Ann Krahne Center for the victims of domestic violence and their families. The shortcomings of services and facilities identified there over the past year have concerned us greatly. The clinical director at the Center was not properly licensed and neither were many of the clinical workers there. Residents there voiced concerns about the how they were being treated.”

“We need this bill,” said Councilmember Blair Ewing, chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. “We can be proud of our strong response as a County to the scourge of domestic violence. But we can’t afford to rest on our laurels. There are gaps and we have to fill them.”

A public hearing on the legislation will be held on May 2 at 7:30 PM at the Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville.

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